

Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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BP Oil Spill: NOAA Re-opens Federal Waters Offshore from the Florida Panhandle to Commercial and Recreational Fishing

Effective **October 22, 2010 at 6 p.m. eastern time** (5 p.m. central time), NOAA will reopen 7,037 square miles (18,225 sq km) of area it had previously closed to commercial and recreational fishing in the Gulf of Mexico in response to the BP/Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

samples in 22 composites for chemical analysis, including commercially and recreationally important species, such as swordfish, tuna, and wahoo. Sensory testing showed no detectable oil or dispersant odors or flavors in the samples, and the results of chemical analysis were well below levels of concern for oil.

NOAA continues to work closely with the FDA and the states to ensure seafood safety, by closing fishing areas where tainted seafood could potentially be caught, and assessing whether seafood is tainted or contaminated to levels that pose a risk to human health. NOAA and FDA are working together to sample seafood from inside and outside the closure area, as well as dockside- and market-based sampling.

The area closed to all fishing is bounded by rhumb lines connecting, in order, the following coordinates:

North latitude	West longitude
29° 30'	At state/federal line
29° 30'	87° 30'
28° 00'	87° 30'
28° 00'	89° 00'
At the state/federal line	89° 00'
Follow the state/federal water line easterly to beginning point	

Map Link:

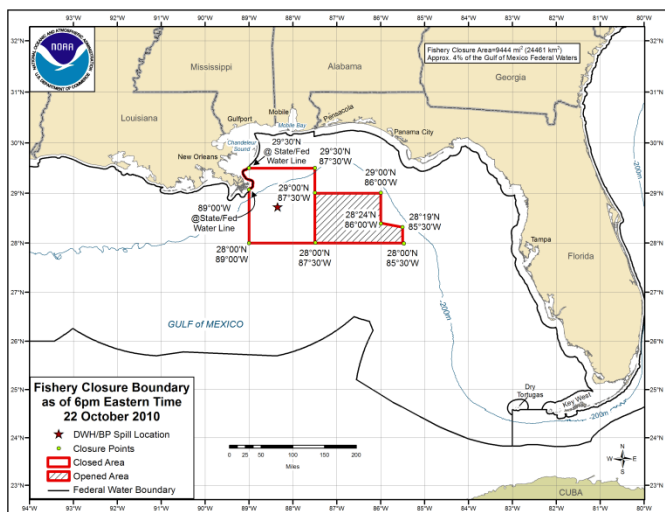
http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/deepwater_horizon/BP_Oil_Spill_FisheryClosureMap_102210.pdf

The area closed to all fishing now measures 9,444 sq mi (24,461 sq km) and covers about 4% of the Gulf of Mexico exclusive economic zone. All commercial and recreational fishing including catch and release is prohibited in this closed area. Transit through the closed area is allowed.

The re-opened area was originally closed because oil was present in the area; however, no oil or sheen has been documented in the area since July 19. Trajectory models show the area is at a low risk for future exposure to oil. NOAA analyzed 155 finfish samples for sensory analysis and 156 finfish

Reminders

Modeling and mapping the actual and projected spill area is not an exact science. NOAA Fisheries Service strongly advises fishermen not to fish in areas where oil or oil sheens (very thin layers of floating oil) are present, even if those areas are not currently closed to fishing.



If state waters are closed to fishing due to the oil spill, all vessels must comply with that closure. If state waters are not closed to fishing due to the oil spill, federally permitted vessels may fish in those waters while abiding by all other applicable regulations.

Permit holders are reminded to maintain their federal vessel permits by submitting timely reporting requirements and renewal applications, even if the vessel is not currently engaged in fishing activities.

Ways to Receive Closure Information:

- Sign up for Southeast Fishery Bulletins: send an email to: SERO.Communications.Comments@noaa.gov
- Call 1-800-627-NOAA (1-800-627-6622) to hear a recording of the current coordinates (with messages in Spanish and Vietnamese)
- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio for updates
- Follow us on Twitter: usnoaagov to get a tweet when the closed area changes

Links for more information:

Southeast Regional Office's Web page:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/deepwater_horizon_oil_spill.htm

NOAA's National Ocean Service

<http://response.restoration.noaa.gov>

Deepwater Horizon Response

<http://www.restorethegulf.gov/>